

Life Group Notes – February 24th 2019

Our God who blesses – by calling us to trust God in our needs as we are generous

2 Corinthians 9 v6-15 and Malachi 3 v6-12

Start by reading the passage from 2 Corinthians. Read it slowly and take a few minutes quietly to allow God to speak to you.

This passage reflects the heart of the New Testament instruction on giving – to give generously and joyfully of our time/gifting/money.

Giving is listed among the gifts of the Spirit, and the gifts come with the grace to administer them – see Romans 12 v6-8.

The New Testament does not specify what 'giving generously' looks like. 1 Corinthians 16 v 1-2 indicates giving an amount 'in accordance with your income'. Luke 21 v1-4 commends the widow who gave everything. Matthew 4 v19-24 reminds us that our treasure is in heaven and we cannot serve both God and money. Read these passages and discuss what God is saying through them.

Giving in the Old Testament focuses on the principle of tithing – giving 10% of everything back to God. Passages in Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy describe the principle of supporting the work of God's people (the Levites) through tithes. The passage above from Malachi sums up the principle and the consequences of disobedience. Read the passage. What can we learn from it?

There is only one reference to tithing in the New Testament – in Matthew 23 v23. Jesus criticises the Pharisees for tithing, but neglecting to practise justice, mercy and faithfulness. He tells them to practise justice, mercy and faithfulness but not to neglect to tithe. Some OT practices are specifically overturned under the new covenant (e.g. 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth', is replaced with the instruction to 'love your enemies'). The command to tithe is not overturned.

In the NT we are instructed to 'give generously' but we are not told what this looks like. The original passage in 2 Corinthians emphasises that giving will look different for each one of us. Our giving is between us and God and we give joyfully of our time/gifting/money, out of a heart of love for God, because God loves a cheerful giver.

During the next weeks, prayerfully consider your response to the letter from the church about giving of our time/gifting/money and respond in obedience to God's leading.

